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Writings on the gaze have traditionally associated gazing with masculine activity. Pointing to a specificity of the gaze that would be masculine and thus exclusive of women brings to light the act of gazing as socially and politically significant. But doing so also risks marginalising certain forms of characteristically female gaze and obscuring the question of a theory of the feminine gaze. Theories of motherhood like those of Kristeva point us towards the possibility of a theorising of woman that integrates woman's biology without reducing her to it. Through the theoretical work of Sigmund Freud, Laura Mulvey, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva on the one hand, and through the photographic work of Jane Gallop/Dick Blau, Renée Cox and Tierney Gearon on the other, I am proposing to partly reject the seemingly entrenched association between masculinity and the gaze and put forward the 'maternal gaze' as the manifestation of a specifically feminine gaze.

Title: From Scopophilic Pleasure to the *Jouissance* of the Madonna: The Mother's Maternal Gaze in Three Photographic Examples

Introduction

In 1990, E. Ann Kaplan noted that, '[w]hile some feminists are arguing that the mother should begin to represent herself, many historical mothers are rather trying to avoid the category altogether. This latter effort betrays the inadequacy of our social institutions to the new developments.' (E. Ann Kaplan, 1990: 140). Kaplan's comments are not surprising given that scholarly literature on the maternal have tended to focus on the representation of mothers and looking into the maternal riddle, with broadly two differing aims. On the one hand, research on maternity and motherhood abounds in the fields of psychology, sociology, politics, medicine, etc but for the most, amount to studies and manuals on how to provide a good environment for effective mothering and childcare, with all the problems such enterprises pose for a feminist ethicsⁱ. On the other hand, and as a response to the construction of mothers as an act of self-sacrificial effacement to the cause of 'good' motherhood, there is a well documented feminist literature commenting on the association of motherhood with monstrosityⁱⁱ. These texts draw attention to the fear that female reproductive functions inspires in western culture and how current discursive frameworks (in particular scientific, medical, religious and legal) aim at managing and regulating a woman's body that is pre-supposed wild and dangerous (Ussher, 2006 or Kaplan, 1992). Beyond these two trends, texts describing a 'philosophy of maternity' are very few and far between and feminist thinkers, from whom we could expect some interest, have overall been discrete on the topic. A minority proportion of thinkers, like Kaplan, have promoted the need for feminism to now embrace issues of motherhood, with a novel discourse that would enable mothers to be represented. Some have even attempted to draw out a theory of the representation of motherhood (Kristeva and Irigaray amongst others), but the task has been taken up only sporadically and these attempts are more random than a concerted effort on the part of an academic community to integrate the issues raised by motherhood into a feminist agenda. Indeed, some twenty years after Kaplan, Andrea Liss (2009) noted in her *Feminist Art and the Maternal* that the feminist theorising of motherhood is needed but never seems to quite take off the ground of good

intention. The overall impression is of a 'burgeoning philosophy of lived feminist motherhood' (Liess, 2009: vi) that has stalled at the budding stage for the past twenty years. I am hoping that an investigation of the maternal gaze will highlight some of the challenges raised by the objectification of motherhood.

Defining the maternal gaze will be a two-fold process. I will re-visit existing theories of the 'maternal' and theories of 'the gaze', in an attempt to frame a possible theory of the 'maternal gaze'. First, Freudian psychoanalysis proposes a theoretical framework on both the maternal and on the nature of 'looking' (scopophilia). This part of my essay will recall the enmeshment of the notion of the maternal with the notion of femininity and the construction of the gaze as a marker of masculinity. Freud's framework suggests that the concept of a specifically maternal gaze is not possible, since the gaze is by definition the activity of man. Other authors (Mulvey, Kristeva) subsequently revised Freud's views by considering the implications of a more metaphysical approach to gender categories and of the act of gazing. Both point to an hermaphroditism of being which, while feasible at a imaginary level, appears impractical at a corporeal level. Yet, examples in contemporary art suggest something different and open the way for an embodied narrative of the maternal. In a second part and through the photographic work of three artists (Renée Cox, Dick Blau/Jane Gallop and Tierney Gearon), my aim will be to chronicle a possible narrative of a specifically maternal gaze.

1. Scopophilia: the pleasure of looking

Freud sketched out a theory of the gaze in two key essays: 'Three Contributions to the theory of Sexuality' published in 1909 (Freud 2005) and 'Instincts and their Vicissitudes' published in 1915 (Freud, 1991). He thought that the manner in which the individual gazes at an object is the result of the individual's development. More precisely, in what Freud termed 'scopophilia', the gaze becomes a pleasurable act by which the individual expresses their libidinal investment into the object looked at. The fate of the object, that is the manner in which it is constructed by the individual (whether it is denigrated or idealised for example), does not so much tell us how to pass judgement on that object (whether it is good or bad) but rather becomes the site where the gazer's own views on their developmental history are chronicled. Freud's idea offers potential for a deeper understanding of the

gaze. He basically turns the act of looking around and proposes that an analysis of the object of the gaze qualifies the gazer's character. It crucially unlocks the obscurity set by oedipal repressionⁱⁱⁱ towards an-amnesia of the gazer's developmental history. Freud extrapolated from his analysis of the gaze a possible historicising of the act of looking and generalised his views in his theory of the gaze (Freud, 1991: 113-138). He proposed that the character of the gaze is dependent upon the development of the individual. Each developmental path is unique to that individual and leads to unique characteristics of the gaze. Types of gaze can nevertheless be defined along a spectrum: at one end is the active-type of gaze (epitomised by the character of the peeping Tom), at the other the passive-type of gaze (the exhibitionist) (Three Contributions, online). The peeping Tom seeks to control the visual object in order to escape narcissism and progress to full oedipal membership^{iv}. The exhibitionist on the other hand is fixated at the narcissistic stage and seeks to make of themselves the passive object of the other's gaze (Freud, 1991, p 129). Freud attributed the drive for oedipal activity mostly to men and the narcissistic desire to be objectified mostly to women^v. His reason was simple: men are biologically destined to control the object in order to avoid the threat of castration^{vi} and de-masculinisation. Women, being already castrated, are by nature dispossessed and therefore destined to desire 'possession' by the masculine gaze^{vii}.

Freud's misogynistic bias was vigorously disputed by Laura Mulvey (1975, 1990), whose seminal essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' (1975 and 1990) enabled a rethinking of the gaze in relation to gender. She demonstrates how Freud's single-minded focus on Oedipus limits the theory of scopophilia to a two-tier understanding of human subjectivity that rests on the belittling of women. In her analysis, men do not so much control the object because it is their biological destiny but construct the object as passive so that they can become phallic by opposition. By 'phallic' Mulvey refers to a process by which 'woman' is the sexual signifier of 'man' and 'it is her lack [of a phallus] that produces the phallus [of man] as a symbolic presence' (Mulvey, 1975: 1). Freud's model thus limits women's potential to knowing their place and accepting their biological fate. In 1990, Mulvey revised her position and put forward a more mitigated view. In the act of gazing, woman is now shown to be able to achieve some form of sexual identity, but an unstable one 'torn between the deep blue sea of passive femininity and the devil of regressive masculinity^{viii}.' (Mulvey, 1990 in Kaplan, 1990: 25). Effectively, women must willingly take part in a self-effacing exercise and become passive

objects of the gaze. Failing to do so would amount to woman's regression to a pre-oedipal, sexually undifferentiated stage of development. She concludes that a woman's masculine-like gaze amounts to an unstable oscillation between passive femininity and regressive phallicism, a metaphoric or psychical transsexualism that is particular to woman's act of gazing. Re-calling her 'masculine phase' to the realm of femininity is for Mulvey 'the last-ditch resistance, in which the power of masculinity can be used as postponement against the power of patriarchy' (Mulvey, 1990 in Kaplan, 1990: 34). But while a woman's embodiment of masculinity is in principle imaginable, the assimilation of such an individual to the realm of cultural signification remains limited to signifiers of anomalous transvestitism (tom boys, butches, etc). Hence, the rescue of woman's gaze as a 'feminine' act remains mitigated in Mulvey's revised essay. Reading Freud and Mulvey, it seems doubtful that we can envision a rescue of woman's gaze and escape a construction of woman as either narcissistic lack (Freud) or oscillating between narcissism and oedipality (Mulvey). The issue of maternity is in Freud the axis upon which his views are hinged. It is then the place where these can also be challenged.

Freud understood the experience of maternity as a form of momentary reparation for oedipal castration. While the oedipal experience ends the boy's fantasy of uniting with his mother^{ix}, it also inaugurates his capacity for union with another woman. Hence the boy's oedipal moment castrates him at the same time as it 'phallicises' him. The girl's oedipality castrates her differently in the sense that 'castration' is a realisation that she was always already castrated (Freud, 1976: 321). There is for Freud no reparation for this biological fact that positions the girl in a wanting of union with the maternal that is on the one hand forbidden by the incest taboo and on the other impossible; born castrated, she cannot displace her fantasy onto another woman. Freud logically posits the inherent bisexuality of the girl which, if enacted in homosexual behaviour, equals the disavowal of her castration and by the same compromises her position as a member of the patriarchal order. The girl develops into a lacking and wanting form of being that she can only hope to compensate through maternity (Freud, 1984: 83-85).

The inconsistencies of the Freudian model have been demonstrated and invariably focus on the way he posits Oedipus as *the* universal explanation for the development of *all* individuals, from

biological entity to social being. The problem as Kristeva noted is that 'as far as the complexities and pitfalls of maternal experience are involved, [...] Freud offers only a massive *nothing*' (in Oliver, 1997: 326)^x. Indeed, Freud left us very little to construct a more inclusive model of human development. For him, if women desire to become socially significant, then maternity is their only path. Failing this is to disavow their castration and to condemn them to a life of mock manhood. Hence, in Freud women are caught between disavowal of identity (mock masculinity) and a truer maternal 'identity' that Freud himself could not describe.

Turning to the question of a theory of the maternal, I would like to emphasise a point made by Kristeva regarding the particular formation the maternal can take and its relation to gender. In the experience of maternity/motherhood, the maternal (obviously) concerns mothers. But for Kristeva, the maternal more generally concerns all individuals. After initially embracing the Freudian model for femininity, she revisited and opened up the meaning of 'maternity' and 'motherhood' as terms that can be applied to human experiences (woman or man's) other than actual pregnancy and parturition^{xi}. She does this by proposing a model other than that of Oedipus and out of which the individual can imagine maternal reunion and rival Oedipal castration. Kristeva intuited that if maternity/motherhood is constructed as the site of woman's signification, as Freud intimated, mothers would then be trapped in a form of deception benefitting patriarchy only^{xii}. Many women do indeed desire motherhood but contrary to Freud's theory of an inherent feminine masochism, their motivations exceed or bypass mere participation in a model that ultimately signifies their relegation into lesser being. Kristeva's theory of what I will term 'the Madonna model'^{xiii} suggests that far from being compliant with a castrating model, many individuals' psychical frameworks (all individuals but mothers' especially) reject castration in favour of other narratives where maternal union is safeguarded. Kristeva does not envision objectification without castration but she does put forward the co-existence of two psychical modalities of signification. This interests us as her theory would suggest also two modalities of gaze, one masculine and one feminine. The feminine gaze would stem from an act of rejection of the masculine gaze and its castrating modality. What is being rejected is explained by Luce Irigaray's work on phallogocentrism.

2. Irigaray and castration

Since 1974 and the publication of her second doctoral thesis *Speculum of the Other Woman* (Irigaray, 1985), Irigaray has been one of the most eloquent in describing the shortcomings of Freud's model for the girl. She made her mark on Anglo-American feminist philosophy by coining the term 'phallogocentrism', a term that 'claims' to question the legitimacy of two key traditional concepts: logocentrism and phallocentrism. Logocentrism is founded on the assumption that there exists a 'transcendental subject of knowledge [who] coordinates and controls the multiplicity of sensations and impressions received from sense experience, thus forming a unified field of experience' (Schutte, 1991: 65). The transcendence of knowledge, moderated by the subject (God, the Self, etc) acts as true referent of all representation. The subject's linguistic experience thus reveals the true relation between the signifier and the signified, between language and intended meaning. Logocentrism is closely related to phallocentrism, the assumption that the epistemic experience is validated only on the condition that the transcendental subject of knowledge *is* male and that his experience *is* the basis of all human experience. Irigaray constructs experience as 'fundamentally hermetic', operating 'according to rules and conventions' that exclude women (Irigaray, 1993: 28). Any experience that falls outside phallocentric epistemic experience must thus be colonised and forced 'into the production of the same discourse.' (Irigaray, 1985: 137). In other words, Irigaray suggests that the seemingly dichotomous nature of gender identity is in fact a flawed conception and that there is only one gender, since man's experience, one of masculinity, is the universal referent. 'Most women's experience tells them [...] that they are first and foremost asexual or neuter [...]. The difficulty they face in order to enter the between-men cultural world lead almost all of them, including those who call themselves feminists, to renounce their female identity and relationships with other women, bringing them to an individual and collective impasse, when it comes to communication.' (Irigaray, 1993: 21). Woman's femininity acts as the object of man's masculine subjective enterprise and is consigned to the role of catalyst. Femininity is a variable defined as whatever it needs to be in order to make man's subjectivity meaningful and whole. Femininity is thus defined as the other of man, his irrational character (man makes 'the unconscious into a property of his language' (Irigaray, 1985: 137), that which lacks subjectivity and therefore in need of 'subjectivation' (forcing her 'into the production of the same discourse.' (Irigaray, 1985: 137)). In those terms, the image of the impregnated female takes its

phallogocentric significance. Pregnancy is the proof of man's corporeal penetration and territorialising of woman, while childcare is the marker of a well negotiated domestication of her enigmatic and feral nature.

Oedipus would be the key moment that sets woman and man as opposite sides of the same coin. In order to recapture a sense of subjectivity beyond the phallogocentric effect of castration, Irigaray, like other so called French feminists (Cixous, Kristeva), proposes a linguistic practice that would tap into pre-oedipal material, bring forth 'feminine writing'^{xiv}. Such a project has been criticised for its underlying risk of essentialising woman into an expression of 'feminine'. From an academic perspective, feminine writing would become a kind of a-symbolic subjectivity that is experienced as non-sensical and dangerously mad. While authors like Irigaray suggest the possibility of a feminine writing that would rival phallogocentric understandings of woman's subjectivity and offer a novel conceptualisation of the feminine subject, others (Kristeva) position feminine writing as that which disrupts the repressive effect of castration and bring forth into language a form of pre-oedipal pleasure or *jouissance*^{xv}. It is the latter scenario I am interested in. By virtue of by-passing the oedipal mechanism that categorises pleasure into good and bad pleasure, *jouissance* would be an extra-linguistic experience that would recall the individual's pre-oedipal experience without formalising it. In short, if language is the repository of symbolic castration, then it also carries within itself the utterances of un-symbolised *jouissance*.

Irigaray's work is interesting as she demonstrates that the subject is founded upon the need to 'neuter' the individual by assimilating *all* individuals to an either/or of masculinity: either masculinised (men) or de-masculinised (women). If we now return to the issues of the maternal gaze, we can begin to outline the application of a theoretical framework, starting with the representation of the mother's confrontation with and rejection of her neutering/castration, illustrated in the work of Jane Gallop and Dick Blau (in Hirsch, 1999).

3. The maternal gaze: resistance to 'neutralisation'

In 'Observations of a Mother', Jane Gallop (in Hirsch, 1999) published pictures of herself at different stages of motherhood (pregnancy, family life, etc), taken by her husband and photographer

Dick Blau. The pictures are accompanied by Gallop's analysis of the experience of being photographed. Her piece superimposes different registers: it is at once a set of observations on her own gaze as a mother upon maternity/motherhood, an academic's analysis of the mother's objectification, mixed with admissions of ambivalence at also being the object of the husband's gaze. Initially reluctant to expose herself to the gaze of her readers, she then progresses to the admission of pleasure at becoming the maternal object. Her misgivings are understandable. Given Gallop's status as one of the most highly respected feminists of the past decades and an expert on Lacan, she ran the risk of being demoted from champion of woman's academic triumph to indulgent object of the masculine gaze. In other words, in offering herself as 'mother' to the scrutiny of her readers, many of them adepts of her work, she was changing camps, from eminent mind to biological creature, from masculine to 'neutered' to use Irigaray's term. The risk was however mitigated by her unquestionable status as 'good' thinker, a position she defensively reminds us of throughout the chapter, first by writing the analysis of her experience herself, and second by reminding her readers of the academic achievements that ran alongside the experience of motherhood. Hence, if there is a de-subjectification (or neutralisation) of Gallop in becoming the object of the paternal/marital gaze, there is a re-subjectification of Gallop by Gallop in her recuperation of the gaze when she looks at herself. This part of her experience would point to an Irigarayan masculinisation of the mother's gaze, or what Mulvey saw as an unstable oscillation of the mind that does not allow for a strictly feminine let alone maternal gaze. But Gallop also boldly points us towards a certain desire of the mother to become objectified in such a way. In her own words '[t]he desire to be a mother [...] might be precisely the wish to become this sort of impressive object: the sort of object that, according to psychoanalysis, our mothers once were for us. While such fantasies are common, they seem better left unspoken.' (in Hirsch, 1999: 71). Such an admission of feminist 'guilt' and Gallop's analytic reparation runs throughout her piece. The pictures testify to a maternal desire to become a pure object while the written text displays a 'resistance to objectification [...] and] a strategy to evade Narcissus' fate.' (in Hirsch, 1999: 71). Gallop's conflicted commentary, torn between academic and maternal conveys a desire on the part of the mother to be at once object and subject of her own gaze, or rather to be neither in isolation, that is to position herself in the act of oscillation Mulvey described. But Gallop's Freudian/Lacanian framework only allows an either/or of the subject/object pair. If the maternal gaze rests on resistance to 'neutralisation', that is resistance to the castrating effect of the gaze, then its

modality will be found prior to castration, in pre-oedipal narcissism. Gallop's reluctance to embrace this side of the debate means she ultimately does not succeed in defining (but hints at) the modalities of the maternal gaze. If we now return to Kristeva, we can further develop the role of narcissistic capture in defining the maternal gaze.

4. Kristeva and the 'Madonna model'

Kristeva proposed revisions to Freud's vision in two essays which have become milestones in the study of maternity and motherhood: 'Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini' (1975) and 'Stabat Mater'^{xvi} (1977). These essays analyse the representation of the Madonna or Virgin Mother and the interest it elicits in its audience. Kristeva proposes that the myth of the Virgin Mother lends itself as compensation for what Oedipus does not say. As we saw earlier, Freud's oedipal model is basically the promise made to 'man' of a possible reunion with the maternal on the condition that it be displaced onto a woman other than his own mother. The same model denies 'woman' similar compensation, except by becoming a mother or through homosexuality, with all the difficulties the latter entails for her social integration. Kristeva thus proposes the 'Madonna model' (the myth of the Virgin mother) as the prototypical model where women^{xvii} fantasise reunion with the mother, a fantasy that partly finds its embodiment in maternity.

Freud had imagined that the girl's 'discovery' of her castration necessarily caused her to realise her mother's castration. She would thus seek reparation from her biological misfortune, turn away from her mother and find solace in the figure of the father whose capacity to impregnate females empowers the girl to hope for phallic compensation in the form of maternity. This traditional view of the girl's developmental process is not fully satisfactory. While oedipal development may well explain how the girl is pushed towards an understanding if not acceptance of her socio-symbolic status, castration does not strictly speaking threaten her physically into relinquishing her fantasy of union with the mother. On the contrary, her interest in maternity pushes her further towards a libidinal investment in the very corporeality of maternal union. The desire and enactment of maternity echoes her foremothers' engagement with the same desire. Hence, the narrative of motherhood is a multi-layered narrative of past maternities and of mothers past. First, the experience of maternal union

between woman and child repeats the girl's fantasy, albeit in reverse, of becoming once more the child-with-mother. Second, the reminiscence of pre-oedipal time re-actualises the desire her mother felt for the baby she was. Finally, the recapture of pre-oedipal contents mirrors her mother's desire for her own mother. The narrative of maternity need not stop with the grand-mother and, however unconscious it may be, we are left with an image of maternity as that which chronicles woman's desire of maternal union that is both diachronic and synchronic. We are then dealing with an altogether different developmental tale than that of Oedipus, a myth where the maternal, rather than the paternal, imprints a woman's developmental path and tags her into a line where maternity becomes the marker of her becoming. As Wiseman noted, 'the threat of castration destroys the boy's Oedipal desire for his mother, whereas the fact of castration creates the girl's oedipal desire' (1993: 116). Oedipus is as we have seen the trigger to the girl's realisation of castration and to her search for a counter-narrative that might repair the narcissistic damage done. Hence, Oedipus is also the trigger to its own expurgation. A woman's fantasy of a return to the mother via maternity necessitates the erasure of a castration that puts her at a disadvantage. Irigaray demonstrated that the oedipal tale quintessentially carries the history of sexual neutralisation through the phallogocentric making of 'man' and 'woman'. The undoing of woman's repudiation lies in the making of a non-phallic narrative that would nevertheless enable maternity. This leads us to a second aspect of the Madonna model.

In psychoanalytic practice, Kristeva observes women's fascination for the myth of the Virgin Mother and their engagement with a different type of developmental tale founded on the mythic figure of the Madonna. She proposes that maternity and motherhood position woman in a split form of subjectivity where she is at once the master of 'symbolic coherence' and the locus of unnameable processes with 'cells, molecules, and atoms accumulating, dividing, and multiplying without any *identity* (biological or socio-symbolical) having been formed' (in Oliver, 1997: 302). While she agrees with Freud that the desire for motherhood is the desire to bear a child of the father (her own and the child's father), 'through and with this desire, motherhood seems to be impelled *also* by a non-symbolic, nonpaternal causality' (in Oliver, 1997: 303). The second aspect of the split subject is evidenced in the fascination the myth of the Madonna and her promise of a lived parthenogenesis provokes in many women. The myth of the Madonna would express women's phantasmatic desire of 'the reunion of a woman-mother with the body of *her* mother' (in Oliver, 1997: 303). The Madonna is a

metaphorically significant and empowering figure whose mythic tale carries the hope of countering woman's repudiation to socio-symbolic neutrality. She is the phallic maternal figure, not yet castrated since she is situated in a time anterior and beyond individual history, a pre-history then when the incest taboo was not known. The ignorance of the fundamental lesson that Oedipus teaches the individual, raises the hope of union with the mother, a union all the more attractive for being a virginal one that excludes the involvement of the paternal penis. The Madonna myth becomes a form of universal blueprint, a model of maternal desire in which the union mother-child *is* possible and will not be broken by the intervention of a third party. Hence, 'motherhood would be nothing more than a phallic attempt to reach *the Mother who is presumed to exist at the very place where (social and biological) identity recedes*' (in Oliver, 1997: 303-4, my emphasis). If we follow Kristeva's lead, Freud was evidently mistaken in foreclosing the importance of the maternal in individual development, especially but not exclusively in the girl's development. The ambivalence (fascination and repulsion) of the mother for the incest taboo points towards a further dimension of the maternal gaze.

5. The Maternal gaze: the capture of maternal *jouissance*

Kristeva's views are a big step away from Freud's phallogocentric view that woman's sexuality is always necessarily tied to a phallic economy, that is to masculine pleasure. In her vision, woman's pleasure can and is *also* irremediably linked to a desire for the Mother and her *jouissance*^{xviii}. But this desire is ambivalent since it points to the transgression of the incest taboo which, according to Kristeva always co-exists alongside the Madonna model. If we return to Gallop's chapter, she tells us that much when she expresses her discomfort at the sight of her flaccid, sagging flesh in a picture showing both herself and her son naked. Her disgust at her 'fallen flesh' (in Hirsch, 1999: 73), contrasted with the firm flesh of the young boy echoes a general consensus that images of overweight women should not be publically displayed. Gallop sees in the dislike for the heavy, saggy flesh of mothers, the fear of the incest taboo. The reaction of discomfort or disgust would be a social coding that does not strictly speaking concern the over-weight body but the post-partum maternal body. Going back to Kristeva's views, what Jane Gallop suggests, but does not say explicitly, is that her disgust at her own flaccidity is in fact a marker of her own desire for her mother's body and that

this disgust is her defence against the fantasy of reunion with the maternal body, her defence against the manifestation of the Madonna model. Desire for and defence against the incest taboo is found in other photographic work and I will return to this again with the work of Renée Cox and Tierney Gearon, two photographers who also find tactics to express their desire for maternal *jouissance*. To finish with Gallop's analysis of Blau's photographic work, I would like to further show how the Madonna model is perceptible in the fantasmatic vision the photographs provoke.

The pictures chosen to take part in illustrating 'Observations of a Mother' depict both Gallop and her son Max. Those pictures bring out a need in the mother to draw comparison and make comments regarding the sameness/difference between her and Max. In the picture I mentioned above, the mother and son are lying naked on a sofa and the setting conveys a sense of symmetry. Gallop is discomforted not only by the heaviness of her flesh, but she is also struck by the symmetry of the two bodies and the contrast between her heaviness and his lightness. In another picture, 'The Wolf Family', Blau pictured a family situation, the son's bath time. The son is naked in the bath while the mother supervises him. Both are staring at the camera with a look that conveys resentment. Again Gallop points out the symmetry between their respective positions within the frame, the physical resemblance between her and Max and the similarity of feelings expressed in their stare. In her own words: '[m]y sense of shame at looking so different from Max here [the sofa picture] perhaps explains why another photograph of the two of us ['The Wolf Family' picture], one when we look strikingly similar, gives me so much pleasure.' (in Hirsch, 1999: 74). Gallop's dislike of differences matches equally her pleasure at finding resemblance. While resemblance reminds the viewer that Max is obviously *from* her, that they were once one and the same body, differences point to the irremediable separation between mother and child, dividing the experience of motherhood into two distinct moments and feelings, separated by birth but also by the becoming of Max as a separate subject. Visible signs of a time preceding separation (genetic markers on Max) then become a source of pleasure for the mother. The son's body is the place where she finds proof that a past union mother-child existed. Through it, the mother is also reminded of her own union with the maternal body of her mother. To sum up, similarities between the mother and child are markers of a pleasure historically located in the past, differences point to the loss of that time and pleasure. The latter are a confirmation of the mother's Oedipal castration and in themselves confirm Kristeva's belief in the co-

existence of two conflicting models. It would also suggest that a pleasure specific to the mother, *jouissance* then, cannot exist in isolation. However, *jouissance* is certainly key to a definition of maternal actualisation. We must recall that in traditional psychoanalysis, the mother's pleasure is by definition sacrificial and masochistic. The type of maternal pleasure we are discussing here is not the self-effacing masochism of the 'good' mother but on the contrary the pleasure that seeks to by-pass castration and satisfy the mother's need for maternal actualisation, albeit at a fantasmatic level. In other words, this type of maternal pleasure, or *jouissance*, would hinge on the disavowal of difference. In this light, Gallop's comments on the similarity of expression in the two protagonists' eyes become more telling. In 'The Wolf Family' picture, the resentment of the mother and child is directed at the intruding father/photographer. Both mother and son team up against the father and his castration. Gallop's pleasure, looking at the photograph is for the disavowal of difference (their sameness) but also for the son's alliance against castration and for the unvoiced promise his gaze holds of a shared fantasy of reunion with her. In short, both mother and son are united in their fantasy of reunion with their respective mothers, that is the Mother before castration or phallic Mother. Since not only the mother but also the son conveys their desire for a fantasised share in the Madonna myth^{xix}, and since the whole tableau was orchestrated by the father, this brings us to the issue of the gender of the maternal gaze.

If we go back again to Kristeva, her analysis of maternal pleasure corroborates Mulvey's views on the possibility of woman's scopophilia: both experiences would always be an act of transvestitism. But while Mulvey is definitely addressing her analysis at females, it is important to insist that because transvestitism can be read as an internalised psychical experience rather than an actual typology of behaviour, transvestitism is not for Kristeva limited to a given biological reality but rather concerns the fantasised internalisation of such biology. What I am trying to say is this: while transvestitism does not leave any doubt as to the biological sex of the transvestitic actor in Mulvey, the same act interpreted by Kristeva becomes a positioning of identity where the definition of 'biological reality' is co-dependent with its apprehension at a psychical level. For this reason, it may be more appropriate to talk of a 'trans-genderism' of the mind when discussing Kristeva's model, a term that would incorporate Mulvey's idea of an oscillation between feminine and masculine in woman's subjective experience of the gaze. While this presents a problem for the biological

construction of identity (but compensated by the creation of new identities such as gender dysphoria), it does not for the psychoanalytic de-construction of the individual's psychical reality^{xx}. Maternal *jouissance* in the scopophilic experience of transgenderism would not be exclusively reserved for parturient females. On a metaphorical level, if Kristeva posits the split subjectivity of mothers and if maternity is the lever to access, albeit partially, a form of purely feminine pleasure (*jouissance*), then the experience of *jouissance* would not be strictly reserved to mothers but also to metaphoric 'mothers'. If we return to Blau's 'The Wolf Family' picture, we may ask the question of the father's motivation and pleasure at provoking a strong response of rejection against paternal presence and authority. Blau's intentions to say anything about the maternal gaze would only be conjecture, since his contribution was photographic, if it were not that Gallop tells us that he intentionally provoked their reaction. By authoritatively commanding them to look at him, knowing his request would be met with anger, Blau arranged for mother and child to express their resentment for the father, an emotion he wanted to capture on camera, with all the *jouissance* such capture might have provoked in him. The modalities of the maternal gaze of men would need a lot more space than I am giving it here. My comments, although brief, are aimed at contesting the contention that biology is *the* determinant of one's being. It corroborates Kristeva's views that maternal *jouissance* is located 'where (social and biological) identity recedes' (in Oliver, 1997: 303-4) and that the representation of such a place is where the maternal gaze is enacted. Hence, in Kristevan theory but also in Blau's practice, the question of men's maternal gaze and their *jouissance* is raised. I will finish with some further illustration of the modalities of the maternal gaze, with two photographs taken this time by mother-photographers: Renée Cox and Tierney Gearon

In 1994, Renée Cox exhibited a series of photographs at the New Museum, New York City, as part of the *Bad Girl* Show (the title itself was ominous). The 'Yo Mama' series presented Cox's attempt at representing herself at the crossroad between gender, race, motherhood and cultural expectation. The result is a series of powerful images where Cox's performance of mother, catholic and black woman subverts cultural expectations of the categories gender, religion and skin colour. One picture in particular shows Cox naked except for a pair of black high heel shoes, holding her two year old son in a gesture not dissimilar to that of a soldier holding a gun. Renée Cox's picture is a

very good illustration of the enactment of what I have described as the Madonna model. The picture powerfully chronicles the tension between the artist's desire and social expectations of motherhood. The seven-foot tall self-portrait of Cox as a mother towers over the audience, staring down at them. There is a reversal of the castration anxiety traditionally proposed in representation of motherhood. The child, held like a weapon across her hips is a phallic representer that both signifies defiance and assurance but also conveys a menacing message. Armed with the child, the unusually taut naked body is at odds with expectations the audience may have of the maternal body as soft, shapeless, fleshy and presenting the stretch-marks associated with pregnancy. In Cox's vision, the mother becomes a warrior now threatening the viewer with castration. The fantasy of motherhood as autonomous from and defensive against socio-symbolic interference is counter-balanced by the presence of black high heel shoes. That the stiletto heels add to the mother's phallic and menacing demeanour makes no doubt. But they also act as a reminder of a cultural bind of woman with sexual object and the terrain of patriarchal possession, and of the child as a consequence of that possession. The tension between a priori cultural markers of femininity and suggestions of maternal empowerment form the intrigue of the photograph. Cox's work successfully portrays the mother's mythic hope of countering woman's repudiation to socio-symbolic neutrality. But while the photograph brings forth the fantasy of being Madonna-like, self-sufficient, strong, etc, it is also a reminder that such fantasy is incompatible with the realities of social demands. Should the viewer form the hope of becoming the weapon-child that can give the mother the desired *jouissance* and make the union mother-child complete, s/he is then confronted with the ambivalence of its social enactment. This goes beyond the mere relegation of the mother to slipping back once more into her uncomfortable shoes, once the fantasising is over. Cox's choice of a stance is not an accident. Her picture mimics adequately the posture of a marine ready for combat. The photograph thus also addresses the fantasy of men of becoming the phallic compensation for maternal incompleteness and of reuniting with her. But when the marine poses for the camera, proudly flaunting *his* weapon, the resulting image is one of composition displaying phallic empowerment, which suggests its deficiency in the first place. His efforts are mirrored by the mother's. Hence, whether the viewer identifies with the child or with the mother, with the boy or the woman, on both accounts, the fantasy is revealed as composed and fantasised. The analysis of another picture by mother-photographer Tierney Gearon leads to similar conclusions, but her engagement with creating a Madonna-like visual fantasy led more directly to

confrontation with oedipal agencies, when her work was met with repression from her audience and subsequently the Law.

In 2001, the London Saatchi Gallery became the centre of a censorship debate over an exhibition entitled 'I am a camera', which included pictures of children by American photographer Tierney Gearon. Members of the public complained that some of the pictures portrayed Gearon's children naked or semi-naked. In particular, a picture of her son and daughter taken on the beach wearing nothing but masks caused media and public uproar (Gearon, 2001). British tabloids reported and fuelled the affair, calling for the exhibition to be closed. The pictures were subsequently confiscated by Scotland Yard's Obscene Publications Squad and the matter reported to the Crown Prosecution Service. The CPS considered prosecution on two grounds: whether the photographs were indecent and whether the Gallery had exhibited them with pornographic intent under the Protection of Children Act 1978. The CPS decided against prosecution on both accounts. While the CPS directed their investigation towards the gallery's accountability, the media focus turned to the photographer, who orchestrated the exposure of her 'subject' as a photographer but more poignantly as a mother. The question was thus asked about the mother's responsibility in the indecent exposure of her children and raised questions about the nature of the mother's gaze. Gearon defended herself by assuring the press that her photographs did not represent 'anything but the purity of childhood' (The Guardian, 13 March 2001). She thus partly defined her 'subject' (I am a camera) as the representation of childhood, understood as the expression of 'the pure'. As we saw, Kristeva explains how the experience of maternity and motherhood cannot solely be reduced to the expression and consecration of a woman's femininity. Motherhood 'is the *fantasy* that is nurtured by the adult, man or woman, of a lost territory; what is more it involves less an idealized archaic mother than the idealization of the *relationship* that binds us to her' (in Oliver, 1997: 308). Tierney Gearon's defensive statement that her photographs represent 'the purity of childhood' must be disagreed with. The containing gaze of the camera (manipulated by the mother) enables the mother to capture the mother's *jouissance* but certainly not her innocence. If there is any intention of representing purity, it is the artist's own fantasy of a purified pre-oedipal world, a world before castration and legal accountability. We can venture that Gearon's defence against the law was in fact a defence against

the evidence of maternal *jouissance*, that the public's complaints and the CPS felt uncomfortable enough about. In *Stabat Mater*, Kristeva defined *jouissance* as 'the pleasure of the damned' (in Oliver, 1997: 319). *Jouissance* irrupts in the places where the law cannot stabilise desire. 'I yearn for the Law [=the phallus]. And since it is not made for me alone, I venture to desire outside the law. Then, narcissism thus awakened –the narcissism that wants to be sex- roams, astonished. In sensual pleasure I am distraught. Nothing reassures, for only the law sets anything down' (in Oliver, 1997: 319). Looking at Gearon's piece, the viewer is confronted precisely with this moment of maternal *jouissance* that the maternal gaze has so aptly staged and captured in a photograph. The indecent nature of the picture, in my opinion does not reside in the nakedness of the children's bodies but in their wearing a mask. What shocked viewers was the removal of identity, the manner in which the photographer masked and stripped her children, thus denying them the protection of an oedipal existence and condemning them to narcissistic exposure. Nameless and faceless, the children's identifiers are physical, natural, sexual and thus linked to the mother alone, as their 'maker'. Tierney Gearon showed her own maternal *jouissance* in the capture of herself in the experience of motherhood when it excludes paternal agency. If there is a purity to be found then, it is in the fantasy of a virginal conception. Gearon's photograph is an invitation to see her *jouissance* but also a temptation to share in its fantasy by identifying with the two immaculately conceived children. Many members of the audience refused the maternal seduction, undoubtedly a defensive reaction against the prohibition of incest it underlies.

Conclusion

To conclude, the maternal gaze hinges on the disavowal of castration in the creation of a vision reminiscent of the Madonna myth which, for Kristeva, is no other than the ignorance of the incest taboo. The forbidding of incest is traditionally modelled on the myth of Oedipus, whose primary actors are the mother, father and son. With the Madonna model, the fantasy of reunion with the mother addresses the daughter's desire. The insight the myth of the Madonna brings to women's psychical life hinges on their ability to fantasise maternity and motherhood. Hence, these two issues are pivotal to an understanding of a woman's modality of being and in this essay, I have focused on

the modalities of representation of motherhood/maternity, in the hope to better define the 'maternal gaze'. Four authors (Gallop/Blau, Cox and Gearon) were chosen to show how the maternal gaze can be enacted. While their photographic work offers varied visions of motherhood, all three lead us to similar conclusions on the maternal gaze.

First, the maternal gaze cannot be conceived in isolation and the presence of the Madonna-type of representation is concomitant with the presence of oedipal contents. In Gallop/Blau and Cox's work the co-presence of the two models was manifested by the sense of ambivalence. Gallop hesitates to embrace the lure of narcissistic capture as this would repudiate her symbolic achievement as an academic. Cox visually impacts on her audience by placing elements connoting Madonna and oedipal contents that invalidate each model in isolation. As for Gearon, her attempt at proposing a more abrupt vision of a model that excludes Oedipus was met with equally sharp repression.

Second, each of the artists' work points to a maternal *jouissance* of maternal gazing. This is more obviously present in the work of Cox and Gearon, since Gallop's ambivalence leads her to frame Blau's work in academic and Freudian (oedipal) terms as a defence against *jouissance*. In Cox, the representation is more visually confrontational, showing the conflict between maternal *jouissance* and patriarchal control of maternal *jouissance*. Cox and Gearon widen the debate by confronting the audience with its own fantasy for the phallic mother and making visible the threat that accompanies the disavowal of incest. For Cox, the presence of the maternal gun associates the image of the mother with that of a killer. So Cox overtly exposes the sense of danger we associate with maternity and motherhood. Gearon does the opposite. The removal of oedipal markers does not allow the audience to redeem the mother's narcissistic fantasy of being Madonna-like. Social organisations (audience, media, CPS) compensate the threat posed by the mother's incestuous *jouissance* by attempting to oedipally reposition her.

Third, the work of these four authors aptly illustrate that the gaze cannot be reduced to an exclusively masculine activity. The unresolved question of Blau's maternal gaze introduced the theme of a Madonna-type fantasy of men, creating a further entanglement of the oedipal and Madonna models at the level of gender. Cox exposes the enactment of the two models as a form of montage

both sexes are engaged with, thus excluding any fantasy of a natural hierarchy of gender and of the gendered gaze.

To conclude, as I hope to have shown in this essay, a study of how mothers look at the maternal and at themselves introduces modalities of the gaze traditionally kept outside conceptual frames. While the attempt to define a specificity of the maternal gaze in isolation proves impossible, the co-presence of the maternal gaze and the oedipal gaze points us towards an equally doomed wholesomeness of the oedipal gaze. Hence, it seems to me that mothers' representations of maternity and motherhood offer the chance for a more accurate description of the modalities of the gaze.

Endnotes

ⁱ see Doane and Hodges, 1992 for an attack on the idea of 'the good enough mother'.

ⁱⁱ See Jane Ussher (2006)

ⁱⁱⁱ Repression is a defensive operation by which the individual bans from consciousness representations such as thoughts, images or memories. By oedipal repression, I am referring to the repression of representations of love and hostility towards the parents during the oedipal phase (between 3 and 5 years old). See Laplanche and Pontalis (1994: 79-84 and 392-396).

^{iv} Throughout this piece, I am using 'narcissism' to refer to 'primary narcissism', that is the early stage of development (from 6 months old) during which the individual's attention is entirely turned towards oneself. Narcissism is typically opposed to oedipality, when the individual is invested in engaging with other individuals. See Laplanche and Pontalis (1984: 261-265).

^v See also Freud's 'On Narcissism' (1914) where Freud makes a general observation regarding the link between narcissistic types of attachment and women (Freud, 1984: 82-84).

^{vi} In Freud, castration refers to the boy's fear of sexual mutilation after he has discovered the absence of a penis in girls. The little boy imagines that the girl is

really another little boy who was castrated for misbehaving. Hence, the boy would comply with social rules for fear of castration. More modern uses of 'castration' tone down the biological aspect and emphasise its symbolic character instead. The threat of castration is not directed at the penis but at what the penis represents, that is power. See Laplanche and Pontalis (1984: 74-78); Nasio (1993: 17).

^{vii} Except in two cases: in the experience of homosexuality and of motherhood. The former would indicate a stalling of the female's development at a pre-oedipal stage of her development where 'boyish-ness' is experienced; the latter is for Freud the (only) true expression of woman's maturity (Freud, 1984: 83 and 85). We shall return to the latter point.

^{viii} Mulvey is referring to Freud's suggestion that the masculinity of a woman was possible on the condition that she denies her biological reality and that her development is arrested at (or regresses to) a stage when sexual difference is not known (before the age of 3).

^{ix} The repression of the mother-son union is understood by Freud as the quintessential moment the boy assimilates the incest taboo: see Freud's work on the 'totemic meal' in *Totem and Taboo* (Freud, 1996)

^x Freud admitted the inadequacy of his theories regarding women's psycho-sexual reality (Freud, 1976: 321).

^{xi} I am thinking in particular about her trilogy on Hannah Arendt (Kristeva, 2001), Melanie Klein (Kristeva, 2004) and Colette (Kristeva, 2005), where she connects womanhood and literary genius as a mode of feminine self-expression.

^{xii} see also de Beauvoir, 1972 or Rich, 1974

^{xiii} See Kristeva's 'Stabat Mater' in Oliver (1997).

^{xiv} 'Écriture féminine', feminine writing is a term coined by Hélène Cixous (1976, 'The Laugh of the Medusa' in *Signs* 1, no. 4, pp 875-93): literary practice that seeks to inscribe the corporeal and psychical experience of femaleness in language.

^{xv} *Jouissance* is a sensory/sexual response to outside excitation which results in a form of pleasure akin to the pleasure experienced by infants. In the adult, *jouissance* is the remnant of the pre-linguistic experience and therefore falls outside the categories of what is judged 'good' and 'bad'. A stroke or a slap equally provide *jouissance*. The process of differentiation super-imposes on *jouissance* a sense of pleasure/displeasure. I will return to this later in the essay. See Jacques Lacan (1992) 'The Ethics of Psychoanalysis' in *The Seminar, Book VII (1959-60)*, New York: Norton, 1992.

^{xvi} 'Stabat Mater', originally entitled 'Hérétiques de l'amour'. Both essays are in Kelly Oliver's *Portable Kristeva* (1997).

^{xvii} In a later stage of the essay, I will briefly address the question of what the Madonna model might offer men.

^{xviii} The co-existence of the two modalities of feminine pleasure must be emphasised as Kristeva does not conceive of the existence of the one without the other. Her analysis still maintains woman in a phallogocentric existence as she does not envisage the acting out of a purely hermaphroditic fantasy. In her work, such enactment is always founded upon a psychical mechanism whereby categories of sexuality are maintained and the homosexual woman would necessarily position herself or her female partner as a 'man'. However, categories of sexual behaviour must be viewed in the context of her overall work on the notion of 'difference'. The debate on sameness and otherness must be internalised and categories like 'heterosexual' and 'homosexual' are not so much biologically motivated as positionings of identity. In her own words: 'I would say even that what interests me when I listen to someone in the psychoanalytic session is not to know that Jean is homosexual and Marie is not, but what kind of particular homosexuality he is living, not to put an etiquette on it, homosexual or heterosexual. Because there are sometimes more resemblances between one homosexual and one heterosexual than the people considered to belong to the same group.' (in Oliver, 1997: 337).

^{xix} The sharing in the Madonna myth of the son's union with the phallic mother (that is the amalgamation of the mother as both impregnated virgin and phallic) also raises questions that I cannot develop here for reasons of space. These are the questions of the son's (male) homosexual desire for the phallic mother (that is his desire for her phallus); and the son's (female) homosexual desire for the virginal mother.

^{xx} Psychically positioned 'trans-identities' is also the topic of 'queer theory', which I will not discuss here to remain close to the psychoanalytic framework.

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